

## **Be a Relational Witness**

First, I am thrilled to be with you guys!  
My 11 years leading the XA group at the Univ of Alabama were the best years of ministry in my life.

I am now teaching as a professor at Continental Theological Seminary in Brussels, Belgium.

I love university students.  
In the Spring I live on campus in a dorm apt...AND I buy a meal plan so I can eat almost every single meal with students.

OK. Let's get going.

**Be a Relational Witness**

This is one of the five pillars of XA.  
We are a "community of witness."

## **Nick Fatato**

Back in the dark ages when I was in XA  
one of my national friends was  
Nick Fatato - he was a XA pastor at one  
of the Universities in Michigan.

Nick's wife, Gina, was pregnant...  
(I think it was their second child)  
While pregnant Gina developed a  
craving for ice cream.

One cold, cold night Nick was getting  
into bed. Just as he was getting warm  
under the blankets, Gina said....

"Nicky..."

He looks at her..."yes, dear."

"Nicky...could you get me some ice cream?"

Nick, of course, gets out of bed, puts on his warm clothes and trudges out into the snow, walking to the campus "convenient" store.

Nick gets to the store...he is in a hurry. He wants to get ice cream and get home to his warm bed.

As he is walking into the store he notices this young man leaning against the wall...his head down.

As he passes by this young man he hears "Nick! It's you!"

Nick suddenly recognized the young man. He had met this young man on campus (it may have been a table outreach) and spoke with him a few times.

I will call the young man "John" (I cannot remember his name).

Nick says, "Hey John, how's it going?"

John steps towards Nick, his face quickly becoming emotional...

"Nick, I have not been doing well. I got depressed over the last two weeks.

My girlfriend broke up with me and I found out today that I am failing one of my classes."

I decided to go to the top of the dorm building and jump. I remembered you and said,

"I'm going to go the campus store. God, if you are real, send that Nick guy to the store. At midnight if Nick does not show up...I'm going to jump off building."

Nick led him in prayer and the young man gave his life to Jesus.

**That was a Relational Witness**

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## **Zachaeus**

In *Luke* 19 Jesus came into Jericho.

A short little man, a tax collector named Zachaeus heard that this Jesus was

coming so he climbed a tree so he could see Him.

When Jesus walked by the tree He looked up and said,

"Zachaeus, come down here. I want to stay at your house today."

Some of the people watching judged both Jesus and Zachaeus "the sinner."

Zachaeus became a follower of Jesus on that day.

How did Jesus know Zachaeus?

The thrust of the story makes it seem like a chance meeting.

Jesus did not preach to Zachaeus.

He invited Himself to go to the "sinners" home.

THAT opened the heart of this  
man...who became a follower of Jesus.

## That was a Relational Witness

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### **Ralph Sigler**

I met a fellow senior at my high school.  
We quickly became great friends.

Ralph discipled me through my senior  
year and the following summer.

I saw something in him that I wanted...

In 1968 when he was 10 years old,  
his parents put him on a Greyhound  
bus going from their small Alabama  
town to Jackson, MS to visit his  
grandmother.

Ralph had just been to a youth camp where he recommitted his life to Jesus and had been filled with the Holy Spirit.

He got on the bus, paid the driver and turned to walk to the only empty seat he could see halfway to the back of the bus.

As he started to walk to the empty seat, he saw this black man sitting in the second row.

When he sat down Ralph felt like he heard the Spirit tell him to talk with this black man.

He said to the Lord,

"I can't get up to talk with this man. If you want me to speak with him, you will have to work it out."

He kept his eyes on the man...praying for him.

When the bus stopped at the next station the driver called out a few names asking these people to speak with him. Ralph's name was called.

When he got off the bus he told the driver his name.

The driver told Ralph that they had an empty bus heading to Jackson. His bus would not be heading there.

Ralph was disappointed knowing that he had missed a chance to speak with the black man.

After going into the little store, Ralph walked to the other bus. The driver was standing by the bus.

Ralph gave the man his name and the driver told him to take a seat.

When Ralph walked onto the bus the only other person there...was the black man! So he sat across the aisle from the black man.

The driver boarded and headed off.

Ralph asked the black man for his name and then asked the man why he was going to Jackson.

Remember...

This is a 10 yr old talking with a grown man.

The man looks at Ralph and says,  
"I just left my wife. I'm going to live with a girlfriend in Jackson."

Ralph replied,  
"Do you know Jesus?"

The man started to get tears in his eyes and simply says, "yes...but things are difficult."

Ralph: "Do you have children?"

The man's eyes were filled with tears as he put his head down and nodded Yes.

Ralph: "You need to go back home to your family. God will help you."

The man hangs his head.

Ralph: "Can I pray for you."

The man nods YES.

Ralph prays for the man, leads him to ask for forgiveness...

The man sobbing...the driver's eyes are teary.

The man tells the driver to please stop at the next station.

He says that he is going to catch the bus back to his family.

## That was a Relational Witness

[17 min]

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How many of us think of  
"sharing the gospel" when someone  
says "evangelism?"

- The Four Spiritual Laws
- The Roman Road
- Leading someone in "the sinner's prayer"

The gospel is best  
"caught" not "taught."

Similar to:

People don't **care** how much you **know**,  
until they **know** how much you **care**.

THAT, ladies and gentlemen...is  
**Relational Witness!**

I'm not a huge fan of trying to argue  
someone into the kingdom.

That's what I did as a young Christian.  
I led around 20 people to the Lord in my  
first 2-3 years.

I hope and pray that He will not show  
me all of the people that I pushed  
*away* from Him.

"Well, I can't share the gospel. I don't  
know enough about the Bible or  
theology."

My response: Tell your story.

For the first 100 years the church probably tripled...

Those believers did NOT have a New Testament.

You know what they did have?  
They had stories...so they told them.  
And the details are not all that important. I don't remember every detail in the stories I am sharing with you...  
BUT the story is still clear.

"What if I don't have any good stories?"  
You DO have good stories.  
How did you meet Jesus?  
A big part of how I am a Relational Witness is by telling about

MY failures...MY struggles...  
MY discouragement...  
AND God's mercy on me.

You meet people every day...  
You have several friends who watch  
your life.

Most of us hear the stories I have told  
and think, "I can't do that."

Nick says he wishes the HS had told  
him: "get out of bed and go to the store"  
"there will be a young man who needs  
to see you so he will not kill himself."  
He says, "but it just my wife wanting ice  
cream."

[28 min]

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I will tell you two more stories, then I need to wrap it up with a challenge.

I had just become a Christian.  
Dan led me to faith. He was a college basketball star...like an idol for me.

Dan wore cool leather sandals.  
I called them his "Jesus sandals."  
I decided that I wanted some Jesus sandals.

Dan took me to a shoe store.  
We looked in the store window and I saw the sandals I wanted!  
So we went inside and sat down.

A young man comes up and asks what we are looking for.

Dan tells the guy that I want a pair of the sandals in the showcase window.

"What size do you wear?"

"12"

The young man said, "We don't have any more of those. The window pair is the last pair...and they are 9's."

A swear word came out of my mouth.  
(sorry...I was newly saved)

Dan just glared at me...to shut me up.  
He looks back at the young man,  
"Do me a favor and go back and double-check."

The young man says,  
"I restocked the rack..."

Dan waved his hand and said,  
"just go take a look."

The young man walks away...

Dan turns to me and says,  
"Let's pray."

He closed his eyes and started praying.

I'm looking around, thinking...

"What the heck is he doing...?"

I think it's crazy.

He's praying for shoes?!?

In the store?!?

Just as he is done, the young man returns with a strange look on his face ...and he is holding a box.

He looks at us and shaking his head, he says,

"I went back because you asked me and I saw a box sticking out from the bottom of a shelf...

I pulled it out...

and it was a pair of the sandals you want...

Then he points the end of the box at me so I can see the number...

"They are 12's" shaking his head in disbelief.

**END of STORY**

THAT is one of my stories...

And I tell it...AND I have many stories.

NOTHING could make me turn away.

[34 min]

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Your stories do not have to be as  
amazing as what I shared...

BUT you do have a story to tell.

Let me tell you HOW you can see God  
work stories in your life:

1. You have to WANT to be used by God.  
Close your eyes for just a minute...  
Raise your hand IF you truly WANT  
God to use YOU.
2. You have to be willing to do whatever

He asks you to do. AND He WILL ask you to do things that you do NOT want to do.

This is where it gets a bit difficult.

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those  
**whose hearts are fully committed to him.**

2 Chronicles 16:9

Close your eyes again, please.

If you are willing to do whatever the LORD asks of you...

PLEASE raise your hand.

PRAY:

I want to pray for those of you who raised your hand...on either question.

3. Now I want to give you just a few principles that you can lean on.

- Learn to listen for His voice.

Spend some of your devotional time sitting still, with no noise, not actively "praying" but listening.

If you have never read *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Bro. Lawrence

- Most of the time it will not be the end of the world if I do what I think He wants... and I am wrong.

One last story.

The XA pastor at Auburn University is Craig Woodham. Some of you know him. He was a student in my XA group at

Alabama...we became friends when he was a sophomore.

Craig told me that when he was a freshman a friend of his lived on the same floor.

Craig got really involved with XA and his friend did not. They slowly did less together.

A few years ago they saw each other and were remembering their time in the dorm together.

His friend had become serious about his faith and expressed gratitude for Craig's witness to him.

Craig humbly tried to deflect this affirmation because he feels like he

should have given his friend more time during those two years.

Then his friend said,  
"I could see Jesus in your life. You were always kind, not judgmental."

**Being a Relational Witness** is not always *talking* about faith...

Living your witness is HUGE.

The fruits of the Spirit is how we can Live our witness.

love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness** and **self-control**.

God help me...these fruits bring me some conviction.

**QUESTIONS:**